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## THE CONSTITUTION OF THE KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

### — Fact Sheet —

Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq [July 15, 2009] - The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) has worked for decades to draft a regional constitution that will serve as a model for tolerance, civil society and democracy in the Middle East. Sanctioned under the Federal Permanent Constitution of Iraq, and passed by the Parliament of the Kurdistan Region, the constitution will be ratified by a referendum later in 2009.

The transparent and open process of formally framing the KRI's constitution began in 2006; however, the document itself is based upon an evolving draft that was first conceived in 1974. During the last several years, every step has been taken to ensure all major constituencies have been consulted; moreover, in developing this document, officials have consulted international experts and democratic governments throughout the world, and studied numerous existing constitutions—including those of Canada, Germany and several U.S. states. As an additional step, approximately 800,000 copies of the latest draft are being printed and distributed to every household in the Region.

So far, more than 5,000 comments from across Iraqi Kurdistan have been received, considered and incorporated into the latest draft. As a result, the Kurdistan Region's constitution:

- ***Adheres to the Federal Iraqi Constitution:*** The federal Iraqi constitution specifically calls for regional constitutions, which are similar to the articles of incorporation for each U.S. state.
- ***Defines Kurdistan as a Region within Iraq:*** The constitution defines the Kurdistan Region as a republic within the boundaries of a federal Iraq.
- ***Recognizes All Ethnic Groups:*** All nationalities and ethnic groups are recognized by the Kurdistan Region's constitution, including Kurds, Arabs, Turkmens, Chaldean-Assyrian-Syriacs, Yezidis, Armenians and Shabaks.
- ***Guarantees Rights of All Citizens:*** The Kurdistan Region's constitution guarantees in Article 35 the national, cultural and administrative rights of the Turkmens, Arabs, Chaldeans, Armenians, Assyrians and other groups—including their right to regional autonomy in the areas and communities in which these ethnic and religious groups form a majority.
- ***Respects All Religions:*** The Kurdistan Region's constitution guarantees the rights of all citizens to practice their faith, regardless of what religion they may practice.
- ***Ensures Plural Representation:*** Electoral provisions in the constitution require that 11 of the 111 seats in the regional parliament are reserved for non-Kurdish ethnic groups.
- ***Provides for Women's Representation:*** According to the constitution, women will make up 30 percent of all members of the Parliament of the Kurdistan Region. This percentage is the largest in the Middle East.

- **Balances Power:** The constitution clearly delineates the powers of the president, parliament and prime minister to ensure a broad representative democracy.
- **Respects the will of the People of Kirkuk, Nineveh and Diyala:** The constitution specifically states that the Kurdistan Regional Government will respect the wishes of the people of the Kirkuk, Nineveh and Diyala provinces, as it pertains to the future administrative status of those provinces. The resolution of this issue is mandated by Article 140 of the federal constitution of Iraq.

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